Union Territory Status to Ladakh region

*282. SHRI MURLIDHAR CHANDRAKANT BHANDARE:†

SHRI BEKAL UTSAHI:

Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Ladakh Buddhists Association has threatened to launch a fresh agitation to press their demand for grant of Union Territory status to the Ladakh region, in view of non-implementation of the 1989 accord for an Autonomous Hill Council for Ladakh.

(b) if so, whether Government have reviewed the whole issue in proper perspective; if so, what is Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI M. M. JACOB): (a) and (b) After their meeting with the Governor of Jammu and Kashmir on 19th November, 1991, the Ladakh Buddhist Association have reportedly postponed their agitation in the larger interest of the State and the country. The next meeting is scheduled in early January 1992. It is hoped that a solution to the problem, satisfactory to all concerned, will emerge in the continued discussions.

SHRI MURLIDHAR CHANDRAKANT BHANDARE: I am extremely sorry that the answer does not relate to the question at all. Ladakh is the North most tip of India. The population there is predominantly Buddhist and that balance was sought to be disturbed by carving out Kargil District out of the original Leh District. The Buddhist feel isolated, discriminated and deprived of political power and economic benefits. However, my question is that in 1989, there was a *Tripartite Accord* with the State Government then headed by Dr. Farooq Abdullah, the Union Government and the Ladakh Buddhist Association where it was agreed that the autonomous hill Councils would be given to this region. I want to know what has happened to the implementation of this *Tripartite accord*. Why do you want the problem to be aggravated by not solving it in time and go over to the extreme demand of a Union Territory for the Ladakh region?

THE MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI S. B. CHAVAN): Sir, it is a fact that there was a *Tripartite* meeting in which the demands of the Ladakh Buddhist Association was also considered by the Government of India's representatives, the Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir and the Ladakh Buddhist Association. And the decision that was taken was that the new demand of the Ladakh Buddhist Association for formation of an Autonomous Hill Council would also be taken up for examination and consideration. It is a fact that it has taken considerable time because after 1989 there was, in fact so much of instability that we could not possibly pursue this matter. Even now there is President's rule in Jammu and Kashmir and that is the main hurdle. Whether it will be possible to give this kind of a status during President's rule is a point which I am getting examined through the Law Ministry.

SHRI MURLIDHAR CHANDRAKANT BHANDARE: I don't think there would be any legal hurdle. Let the Home Minister get it examined and let the decision come before the next january 1992 meeting. I want to know what steps are being taken to assuage this feeling of acute discrimination which the Buddhists are having in the Ladakh region.

SHRI S. B. CHAVAN: In fact, it will not be correct to say that it is only the Buddhists who have been discriminated against. This entire Leh region, whether the people there are Muslims or they are Buddhistsis having a feeling of being neglected. And that is why we will have to consider that those who have not been developed properly, special

†The question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Shri Murlidhar Chandrakant Bhandare.

attention will have to be paid for their development. And if it comes to that, certainly Government of India is prepared to use all its good offices with the State Government in order to create this kind of a Hill Council so that more attention is paid for the development of this area.

SHRI MURLIDHAR CHANDRAKANT BHANDARE: What active steps are being taken? I don't want a general answer.

SHRI S. B. CHAVAN: I have said earlier that I am getting this matter examined and I am going to get the opinion of the Law Ministry. Thereafter we will definitely actively consider what the honourable Member has said.

SHRI TIRATH RAM AMLA: The people of Leh region which consists of Buddhists people have been agitating for a very long time for some sort of special status because they fear so, that they are not being given their fair share by the State Government...

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Home Minister has already said about what you are asking. The Home Minister has said that.

SHRI TIRATH RAM AMLA: They have been agitating from time to time and everytime our leaders have been giving them an assurance even our beloved leader Rajiv Gandhi went there and gave them some assurance; but so far nothing has been done. Now their patience is getting exhausted and I think if they again start an agitation and no proper measures are taken to redress their grievances it will be something very drastic. Will the Home Minister see that some immediate steps are taken to redress their grievances?

SHRI S. B. CHAVAN: I can assure the House that we are equally keen to see that this Leh region is developed on proper lines and there is no feeling of neglect. At the same time we would like to avoid any kind of emotional divide between the Ladakhi Buddhists and the Muslims also. That harmony will have to be maintained. But at the same time emphasis will have to be given on the development aspect.

SHRI G. G. SWELL: The State of Jammu and Kashmir of which Ladakh is a part, is in a tangled mess and there seems to be no solution in sight. The situation is getting worse by the day. Now I would like to know, apart from this demand of the Ladakhi Buddhist for an autonomous region, not a District Council but for an autonomous region-it is there-whether there has also been a talk for trifurcation of Jammu and Kashmir with a view to contain militancy within the Valley. There have been views aired in the press for Kashmir as a condominium. Things are going to get worse with what is happening with the Islamic Republics in the Soviet Union. You are going to see that. In view of this, are you doing a fresh exercise in taking a view on the whole of Jammu and Kashmir and come forward with some fresh ideas as to how to solve this problem in the national interest?

SHRI S. B. CHAVAN: Sir, the Government is fully aware of the developments taking place around us, especially in the Soviet Union. But I can assure the honourable Members that we are concentrating on the developmental aspects of this area. The demand for a Union Territory has been given up by the Ladakhi Buddhists' Association and they are not asking for any separate entity to be created in Jammu and Kashmir. What they are asking for is an autonomous District Hill Council and if there is no legal hurdle under the President's Rule, certainly we will lay emphasis on that and we will see to it that they succeed in getting it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Prakash Ambedkar.

SHRI PRAKASH YASHWANT AMBEDKAR: Sir, in the year 1987-88, during the agitation started by the Buddhists' Association, there was a call given by it for the boycott of shops run by the Muslims and I am told that the boycott

still continues. May I know from the honourable Minister what steps he has taken to see that there is communal harmoney? This is the first part of my question.

I now come to the second part of my question. There are new settlements coming up in Ladakh. The new settlements that are comingup in Ladakh art not of people from the Valley, but of those people who are coming from that part of Kashmir which is under the control of Pakistan and which is known as Azad Kashmir. May I know from the Government what steps they have taken to restrict the migrants, as they are called, from the Azad Kashmir area to Ladakh and what the Government is going to do about it?

SHRI S. B. CHAVAN: Sir, with regard to the second part of his question about the illegal migrants who are coming into that area and trying to create colonies, certainly the Government will take serious note of it and every action will be taken to see that people from the POK are not allowed to come over there and tilt the balance of population in that area and every effort is made to see that this thing is not allowed.

SHRI PRAKASH YASHWANT AMBEDKAR: Sir, he has not answered the first part of my question.

SHRI S. B. CHAVAN: Sir, regarding the first part of his question, I would like to state that the Government is equally interested in seeing that communal harmony is maintained in that area and that there is no deliberate attempt to divide the population in that area into Buddhists and Muslims, we have been sending the Governor there and I am also personally going there in order to persuade both of them by saying that in matters of development we are prepared to give any help that they would like to ask for that area, but they should not get themselves divided into Buddhists and Muslims.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Sangh Priya Gautam.

श्री संघ प्रिय गौतम : मान्यवर, सभापति महोदय, आपका बहुत-बहुत धन्यवाद । जैसा कि आप जानते हैं कि मैं स्वयं बौद्ध हूं और इन लद्दाखी बौद्धों की पीड़ा से मैं पूर्णतया अवगत हूं । इसलिये बड़ी ही प्रमाणिकता के साथ मैं यह प्रश्न पूछ रहा हूं ।

मान्यवर, आप जानते हैं कि लद्दाख से लेकर अरुणाचल तक अपने राष्ट्र के जितने भी सीमांत प्रान्त हैं यह सदियों से बौद्धों से आबाद हैं । यद्यपि इनकी संस्कृति अलग है । लेकिन यह हमेशा देशभक्त रहे हैं, इन्होंने कभी देशद्रोह नहीं किया और न कभी इन्होंने देश का भेद ही दिया और कभी अलग क्षेत्र या प्रांत की मांग नहीं की । लेकिन फिर भी पिछले काफी अरसे से लद्दाख के अंदर बौद्धों के समाज पर, उनकी संस्कृति पर आघात किया जा रहा है, उनको बलात धर्मान्तरण करने के लिए मजबूर किया जा रहा है, उनकी बहन-बेटियों से जबर्दस्ती शादी की जा रही है । तो मैं आपके माध्यम से सरकार से यह पूछना चाहता हूं कि जनसंख्या के संतुलन के बिगड़ने के कारण जो कश्मीर की स्थिति आज है, यदि इन बौद्धों को वहां से भगा दिया गया या इनका धर्मान्तरण हो गया तो यह संतुलन क्या और ज्यादा नहीं बिगड़ेगा और इससे कश्मीर की स्थिति और ज्यादा भयावह नहीं होगी ?—ए-पार्ट ।

बी-पार्ट, वह कौन सा राजनीतिक दबाव या कौन से विचार का अभाव है जो सरकार को मजबूर कर रहा है कि यह लद्दाख को यूनियन टैरिटोरी घोषित नहीं कर रही हैं ?

श्री एस० बी० चव्हाण : मैं ऑनरेबल मेंबर से इतना ही कहना चाहूंगा कि गवर्नमेंट इस बात को जानती है कि उनकी अलग संस्कृति है, उन्होंने अपना अलग कल्चर मैंटेन करने की कोशिश की है । उसको पूरे तरीके से बढ़ावा देने की नीति केंद्रीय शासन की है । इसलिए यह इम्बैलेंस वहां पर न हो, इस बात के लिए जो कोशिश करना जरूरी है, चाहे वह ऑफिशियल लेवल पर हो या अनऑफिशियली करने की नौबत हो, तो उस चीज को करने की कोशिश करनी चाहिए और उनके दिल में यह भावना पैदा होना कि

हम पर जबर्दस्ती की जा रही है, हमारी बहू-बेटियों को जबर्दस्ती या उनकी शादी की जा रही है या उनका कन्वर्जन किया जा रहा है, इस बात को टालने के लिए जितनी कोशिश शासन की तरफ से हो सकती है, हम बराबर करेंगे ।

*283. [*The questions (Chowdhry Hari Singh) was absent for answer* vide col. 29-30 infra].

Exploration of oil in Pondicherry Coastal area

*284. SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any proposal under Government's consideration to conduct oil exploration in the off-shore areas of Pondicherry Coast in view of the large potential for oil in the region; and

(b) if so, by when the work is likely to start?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS WITH ADDITIONAL CHARGE OF MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI S. KRISHNA KUMAR): (a) and (b) The Oil and Natural Gas Commission is already conducting oil exploration off the Cuddalore-Pondicherry coast.

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: I thank the hon. Petroleum Minister for having replied to my question in a positive way. Normally, Sir, a reply given to hon. Members is: No, does not arise. Now it is a positive reply coming from the hon. Minister.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So you put a positive question.

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: Yes, Sir. According to the present estimate, oil reserve in Cauvery basin is 67.68 million tonnes. So far the Government propose to tap oil from the Cauvery basin up to 1994-95 only 2 million tonnes. The total reserve is 67.68 tonnes. Only 2 million tonnes till the end of the 8th Five Year Plan they are planning to tap from that region. Five areas they have selected up to Pondicherry, Cuddalore, Karigkal,, Thanjavur districts and South Arrot district. Sir, a rich oil reserve is there. But in the current Five Year Plan the Government has sanctioned about Rs. 655 crores in the total allocation of Rs. 3800 crores. Sir, as in other sectors, in oil exploration also the southern side is being neglected. Therefore, I would like to know from the hon. Minister, what is the state of oil exploration in Pondicherry and Cuddalore area, whether any encouraging results are coming and when are you going to tap oil from that region?

SHRI S. KRISHNA KUMAR: Sir, Pondicherry and Ariyaur off-shore exploration...

AN HON. MEMBER: Cuddalore, not...

SHRI S. KRISHNA KUMAR: I am talking of subbasin. The subbasin to which the hon. Member referred forms part of the Cauvery basin, which is a category-I basin with proven prolific oil reserves and where commercial production has already started Now, Sir, for this basin which constitutes the exploratory effort, as far as Tamil Nadu State is concerned, ONGC has already spent Rs. 1300 crores. The exploration in different categories basins is as per well formalised plan and programmes spaning various Five Year Plans. And I would like to emphatically state that there is no neglect whatsoever as far as the southern States or this particular basin are concerned. Already, Sir, we have 11 on share rigs deployed for drilling in this basin. I am not reading out the names. Three off-shore rigs are operating. We have conducted geological surveys for 20,000 kms, off-shore for 40,000 kms and gravity magnetic surveys for 15,000 kms. On on-land 118 wells have already been drilled at 42 prospects Twenty-six wells have proved to be oil or gas bearing. In the off-shore area a total of 42 wells have been drilled in 19 prospects. Nine wells on 3 prospects are hydro-carbon bearing.